

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1854

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7620

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LE

SUBJECT: SARKIS INAUGURATION TO BE AT CHTAURA

REF: BEIRUT 7592

1. SUMMARY. PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE HAS ANNOUNCED SESSION FOR SARKIS' INAUGURATION TO TAKE PLACE IN CHTAURA BEGINNING AT 1200 NOON SEP 23. DECISION COMPELLED BY FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO ARRANGE SECURITY AT MUSEUM ON BEIRUT CONFRONTATION LINE. SOME OBJECTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL GROUNDS, BUT DECISION APPEARS TO ENJOY GENERAL SUPPORT, AND SEVERAL SOURCES REPORT THAT BETWEEN 60-70 DEPUTIES WILL ATTEND. CHAMOUN WILL PLAY PROMINENT ROLE. SARKIS INAUGURATION SPEECH WILL BE FIRST CLEAR READING OF HIS VIEW ON HOW TO SOLVE LEBANESE
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CONFLICT. END SUMMARY.

2. ANNOUNCEMENT MADE. AFTER MEETING OF PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE SEP 21, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE KAMEL EL-ASSAD ANNOUNCED DECISION TO HOLD PARLIAMENTARY SESSION FOR SWEARING-IN OF PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS AT PARK HOTEL, CHTAURA, AT 1200 NOON SEP 23. EL-ASSAD SAID DECISION CONFORMED TO WILL OF MOST DEPUTIES. HE SAID HE EXPECTED 65-70 DEPUTIES TO ATTEND, BUT EVEN IN ABSENCE OF QUORUM SARKIS WILL BE SWORN IN, IF NECESSARY BEFORE ONLY THE PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE.

3. MUSEUM UNSAFE. DECISION WAS TAKEN AFTER FAILURE OF EFFORTS, PRINCIPALLY BY ARAB LEAGUE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE, TO ARRANGE SECURE MEETING AT MUSEUM ON BEIRUT CONFRONTATION LINE. SARKIS HIMSELF, ACCORDING TO DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE MUNIR ABU FADEL, WOULD HAVE PREFERRED MUSEUM, AL MUHARRIR REPORTS THAT SARKIS PERSONALLY CONTACTED ELEMENTS OF JUNBLATT'S CAMP AND TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO CONTACT PLO LEADER ABU IYAD TO EXPLAIN IMPOSSIBILITY OF A MEETING AT MUSEUM.

4. CRITICS. CHTAURA SESSION HAS MET WITH SOME OPPOSITION. DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE MUNIR ABU FADEL STATED FLATLY THAT SESSION WOULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND THAT VIEWS OF FRENCH CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERT VEDEL (REFTEL) ARE NOT UNCONTESTED. ABU FADEL SAID HE BELIEVES SOME 42 DEPUTIES WOULD NOT ATTEND SESSION. KAMAL JUNBLATT'S POLITICAL COUNCIL ISSUED STATEMENT CLAIMING THAT ONLY PARLIAMENT ITSELF COULD UNDERTAKE DECISION TO MEET OUTSIDE BEIRUT, BUT JUNBLATT HIMSELF IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HE WOULD ATTEND CHTAURA MEETING IF HE WERE ASSURED OF SUFFICIENT PROTECTION AND IF SYRIAN TROOPS WITHDREW FROM THE AREA. RAYMOND EDDE SAID HE WOULD PREFER TO POSTPONE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION RATHER THAN HOLD IT OUTSIDE BEIRUT, AND THAT SARKIS COULD ASSUME OFFICE PRIOR TO TAKING OATH. EDDE'S NATIONAL UNITY FRONT IS MEETING SEP 22 TO TAKE FORMAL POSITION.

5. SCENARIO. SARKIS IS EXPECTED TO GO TO CITY HALL OF ZOUK MIKAEL AT 1000, SEP 23, FOR CEREMONIAL TRANSFER
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OF POWER OF OFFICE. PRESENT WILL BE FRANGIE, PAST PRESIDENTS CHAMOUN AND HELOU, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO MONSIGNOR BRUNIERA (AS HEAD OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS), AND CABINET MINISTERS. HE WILL THEN TAKE SYRIAN MILITARY HELICOPTER TO RAYAK AIR BASE IN THE BEKAA AND DRIVE TO CHTAURA. SYRIANS HAVE OFFERED TO PROVIDE HELICOPTER TRANSPORT FOR DEPUTIES AS WELL. SARKIS WILL MAKE ADDRESS AFTER TAKING OATH, WHICH OBSERVERS EXPECT WILL

FOCUS ON ASPECTS OF LEBANESE-LEBANESE RECONCILIATION. IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER SARKIS WILL RETURN TO BEIRUT SAME DAY OR POSSIBLY STAY OVERNIGHT IN CHTAURA FOR SEP 24 PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN-LEBANESE MEETING, WHICH IS STILL EXPECTED. IT IS ALSO UNCLEAR WHERE SARKIS WILL TAKE UP RESIDENCE. PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AT BAABDA HAS BEEN UNDERGOING REPAIR WORK FOR LAST TWO WEEKS IN ANTICIPATION OF HIS ARRIVAL, BUT AREA IS STILL UNDER SPORADIC ARTILLERY AND MORTAR FIRE.

6. COMMENT. IT APPEARS THAT CHAMOUN, WHATEVER HE MAY HAVE CONTEMPLATED LAST WEEK, HAS NOW AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN SARKIS' INAUGURATION, AND WILL HIMSELF PLAY AS PROMINENT A ROLE AS POSSIBLE IN PROCEEDINGS. DESPITE SOME GRUMBLING, IT APPEARS THAT GREAT MAJORITY OF LEBANESE POLITICAL VOICES ARE AGREEABLE TO CHTAURA SESSION. EVEN JUNBLATT, WHILE OBJECTING, HAS APPARENTLY NOT CLAIMED SCENARIO IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL. SARKIS' INAUGURATION SPEECH WILL BE FIRST INDICATION BY THIS REMARKABLY SILENT MAN OF HIS PERSPECTIVES ON LEBANESE CONFLICT AND HOW HE MIGHT GO ABOUT TRYING TO RESOLVE IT.
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